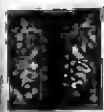


The Builder.

No. CCCCXXXV.

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IN our present number we give a view of the residence of one well known to our readers,—Somerleyton Hall, near Lowestoft, the seat of Mr. Samuel Morton Peto, member of Parliament for Norwich, and constructor of some of the most important railways in the kingdom.* The original house here is said to have been built by Sir John Jernegan in the reign of Elizabeth (afterwards altered and added to), and old Fuller speaks of it as being "among the many fair houses of the gentry of this country," and says the place well deserves the name of Summerley, because it was always summer there, the walks and gardens being planted with perpetual greens." Camden, after speaking of Lake Lothing, says,—"At the beginning of this, Lothing, a little town, hangs (as it were) over the sea; and at the end of it is Gorleston, where I saw the tower of a small ruined religious house, which is of some use to the seamen. More toward upon the Yare is *Somerley*, formerly (as I was told) the seat of the Fitz Osberts, from whom it came to the knightly and famous family of the Jernegans."†

In Morden's map of Norfolk the place is marked "Somerley Town." On the other side of Yarmouth, by the way, some will remember there is a place called Winterton, which," says Camden, "I fancy had that name given it from the wintery situation." The termination *ton* is very general in the neighbourhood.

Concerning Lothing, as he calls it, Camden, describing Yarmouth, records, that about the year 1340 the citizens walled that town round; and "in a short time became so rich and powerful that they often engaged their neighbours the *sea-fighters* in sea-fights, with great slaughter on both sides," having a "peculiar spite against them." The engagements between Yarmouth and Lowestoft are fortunately of a very different kind now, and these engagements have been mainly brought about by the proprietor of Somerleyton.

Mr. Peto purchased the place from Lord Sydney Godolphin Osborne in 1844, and has been occupied from that time in its improvement. The estate comprises, as we understand, 3,500 acres. Round about the houses are six acres of pleasure grounds and some acres and a half of kitchen garden, and though the natural beauties of the place are, perhaps, than might have been desired, the untainted expenditure have supplied the defect. The house has been erected from the designs of Mr. John Thomas, well known from his connection as sculptor with the new Houses of Parliament. Parts of the old structure were retained, and have in some degree influenced the interior arrangements. Probably if Mr. Peto had seen then what he now, he would have cleared all away, and started afresh: this, indeed, is the opinion that most have arrived at who have tried the same experiment.

The style of the building externally we must call Elizabethan, for want of a term of closer definition, and the materials used are Caen stone and red bricks.* There are two towers, it will be seen: the upper part of the principal one is fitted up as an observatory, and further contains a tank, into which water is pumped by steam for the supply of the house. The dormer windows in the roof of the house are boldly treated, and form very effective features, somewhat Scotch in character.

The principal apartments are the entrance-hall and the dining-hall. The latter is very lofty, for its size, and has a richly decorated ceiling, carried on corbels, which present amongst their ornaments the bear, stag, and hunting emblems. The sides of this room are in two stories, and the observer will detect here the junction of old work and new. The appearance of extent is increased by looking-glasses at each end, in the upper story, which serve to close openings into a gallery. The windows are filled with stained glass, by Mr. Ballantyne, of Edinburgh (a little too yellow in tone), and include medallion heads, in the first, of Newton and Watt; in the next, of Chaucer and Shakespeare; and in the third, of Wren and Reynolds,—thus memorialising science, literature, and art. The desire to do this is apparent throughout the edifice and grounds; and forms, indeed, the great and distinguishing characteristic of the place.

The chimney-piece of the dining-hall is supported by two figures,—of an old man and a young girl, incarnating summer and winter, and is surmounted by the shield of the proprietor in foliage, with his earnest motto, "*Ad fidem fidelis*."† Compartments are formed on the walls for painting, and to fill these, commissions have been given to Sir Edwin Landseer and Stanfield (for the space on each side of the chimney-piece), and to Herbert and Lance,—the space over the side-board at each end of the hall.

The painted decorations, we may here mention, are being executed by Mr. Moxon,—of whose singularly excellent imitations of rare woods and marbles, we have before had occasion to speak.

The entrance-hall has a panelled ceiling; windows filled with shields of arms; a staircase of oak, and gallery carried on large consoles. Over the fire-place here, is Machue's fine picture, "*The Departing Warrior*." Scattered throughout the house are many very interesting pictures, and a small collection of ancient armour.

In what is called the White Drawing-room, the plaster enrichments are more light and elegant than elsewhere, especially the caps of the pilasters, and the foliage in the panels of the ceiling. Two sculptured marble chimney-pieces here present, in one, figures of Art and Science, with heads of Raffaele and Watt; and in the other, figures of Music and Poetry, with heads of Shakespeare and one of the world's great composers. The walls of this room are panelled with looking-glass. The library has a panelled ceiling, somewhat too heavy for a low room, and is fitted up with carved oak by Wilcox, of Warwick.

In the principal bed-rooms are many things from Stowe, and some curious wall-hangings, showing, in what Falstaff calls "*Sy-bitten*

tapestries," the stories of Penelope and Lucretia, and incidents in the life of Moses.

The grounds contain a large amount of sculpture: the fountain indicated on the left side of our view includes a female figure of elegant design. Near this are four figures of boys in marble, personifying the seasons: two garden seats near the conservatory show sculptured heads of some of the early kings, and at the entrance to a fine avenue of trees on one side of the grounds are sculptured hunting groups of very considerable merit, all the work of Mr. Thomas.

The conservatory is mainly of iron, with a roof on the ridge and furrow principle, and is floored with coloured cements and tiles. The stable buildings include a clock tower, and the furnace chimney in the gardens is topped with iron, and made to accord in character with the house. At a small distance from this there is a small chapel, with which, probably, an architect has had little to do.

There was a divine who used to say, when preaching to the youths of his congregation, "beware of being golden apprentices, silver journeymen, and copper masters;" and with a like motive it may not be useless to mention that Mr. Peto, now only forty-two years of age, left school at the early age of fourteen; and being apprenticed to his uncle, Mr. Henry Peto, the builder, worked three years at the bench, used the trowel for a year, and passed the remaining three years of his apprenticeship at the mason's banker. When he was little more than twenty-one, his uncle died, and left his business and his capital jointly to him and to Mr. Thomas Grisell, also a nephew. Their first work was Hungerford Market, their second the new Houses of Parliament,—afterwards placed wholly in the hands of Mr. Grisell. They built the Reform Club-house, the Oxford and Cambridge Club-house, the Model Prison at Clerkenwell, and many other large structures: the St. James's Theatre was completed by them in thirteen weeks. They also entered very largely into railway works, and to these, after the dissolution of the partnership, Mr. Peto confined his attention: we may mention more especially the Eastern Counties line, the line from Ashford to Folkestone, the Southampton and Dorchester, the Oxford and Birmingham, and in conjunction with Messrs. Betts, the whole of the Great Northern line north of Peterborough. When we say that there were employed on his works at one time ten first-class locomotive engines, 2,300 waggons, 916 horses, and 14,300 men, some idea may be gained of their great extent, and of the energy and power required to keep all well in hand. There are many excellent traits recorded of Mr. Peto, but for none does he deserve more honour than for his continued and enlightened efforts to raise the character of the large bodies of men engaged under him.

Mr. Peto has earned for himself a great reputation for enlarged views and liberality, and has shown how much we may advance our own interests by attending to the interests of others.

"THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY."—Under this title Messrs. Day are about to publish a series of illustrations of the choicest specimens produced by every nation at the Great Exhibition of Works of Industry, 1851, edited by Mr. Digby Wyatt.

* The plumb is of Augsburg stone.

† We shall give an engraving of this chimney-piece in an early number.

See p. 308.
Camden's Britannia, translated by E. Gibson. 1606.